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THOUGHTS

ON

EVANGELIZING

THE WORLD.

BY

THOMAS H. SKINNER.

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PREFACE.

The following discourse was delivered at the opening of the Mercer-street Presbyterian Church, and is published at the request of the Session and Trustees.

In acceding, after some hesitation, to the request for its publication, the author had no higher hope than that possiblyhe might, directly or indirectly, excite somewhat more of reflection on the subject of his remarks, than has generally been given to it. He feels perfectly sure, that not the want of know-

ledge, but merely of reflection, in the true sense of the word, hinders the principles which he has advanced, from asserting ascendant power in the Church, and harmonizing all Christians in their influence and efforts in behalf of the salvation of mankind. The great difficulty in the way of the universal spread of the Gospel, he is persuaded, is not physical, but moral. The event to be achieved demands indeed, the exertion of the Omnipotent arm; but is not Omnipotence pledged for its achievement whenever wisdom, or a just regard to what on the whole is best, does not forbid? And that prohibition never stands in the way, as the Scripture plainly teaches if there is a certain condition of things in the Church, which cannot

be wanting but by the Church's own fault. Were the state of the Church what it should and might be, the work of converting men would cease to linger. This, it is supposed, cannot be doubted. The world has not been converted, because the moral estate of the Church has been so low, her unfaithfulness and perverseness so great, that the divine intervention necessary to her triumph, could not consistently with the ends and arrangements of infinite wisdom, be vouchsafed. This is the lesson of the scripture which stands at the head of the discourse; a scripture deserving, particularly at the present day, the profoundest meditation. The psalmist had no expectation that the world would ever be enlightened and reformed, but by means of an antecedent

reform in the Church: he therefore prays that God would show his sanctifying and illuminating mercy to the Church, to the end that the world through the appropriate instrumental influence may be partaker of the same mercy. His prayer accords with the established order of God in respect to this matter, as revealed every where in his word, and as acknowledged in all ages by the Church. Would that due reflection might be given to the known and unchangeable counsel of Heaven, on which this prayer proceeds, and which, with so much pathos it enforces! Has not the Church entered unprepared upon her work? Has she not begun it without being endued with power from on high? Has she received the pre-requisite anointing of the Holy

Spirit? Do not continued contentions and divisions and other deplorable evils within her own enclosures, make, her a reproach and a proverb in the view of that world which she has undertaken to gain over to her side? This will be admitted, probably; but will it be reflected upon, will it be laid to heart? The Church will plead guilty, but who of her members will reform? *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

If what is advanced in this discourse shall be the means of directing the enlivened attention of only a few devout and vigorous minds to the subject-matter of it, the author will have strong

hope of some good from its publication. The time is drawing nigh when the sentiments of it, he is confident, will not be as much disregarded in practice, as they have been ever since the degeneracy of the Church.

THOUGHTS ON

EVANGELIZING THE WORLD.

"*God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us: Selah! That thy way may be known upon earth; thy saving health among all nations.*" Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.

The present times are in many of their appearances and prognostics different from all preceding ones, and from nearly all, in this, that the Church have undertaken to evangelize the World. This, be it thought of as it may, stands high among the enterprises of this innovating age. Christians, to a wide and constantly enlarging extent, are becoming awake to the fact, that evan-

gelizing the world is a work which their Saviour has required them to attempt, and one which by his aid will be accomplished. It has accordingly been systematically entered upon. The process of planting Christian churches and institutions among the unevangelized millions of mankind, with the declared purpose never to cease from the undertaking until it is gone through with, has been begun and is now going on. And it is going on, under the advantage of recent inventions and improvements in philosophy and the arts. The press is exerting its surprising powers on a vast scale, to give the scriptures and other vehicles of Christian knowledge free circulation in all the tongues and dialects of man. Christian education also is patiently insinuating its quiet but resistless influences into the great mass of human igno-

rance. A manifest improvement too has taken place in the character of the ministry. The Apostles and first evangelists, seem as it were to have risen from the dead in some of our missionaries. The character likewise of preaching and pastoral labour, in many parts of Christendom, is undergoing an important change. The end pursued in preaching, both publicly and from house to house, is now as it was at first, the immediate conversion of men; and the results are correspondent. And the general piety of the Church is gradually becoming more and more like that of the primitive Christians. In appropriate and efficient methods, the private members of the churches, are co-operating with their pastors in self-denying labours to bring the human mind universally under the power of the gospel. It deserves

moreover, grateful recognition, that the present, in a degree unprecedented since the primitive times, is an age of liberality. The hope seems almost warranted by present appearances, that the day is not far distant, when the world will see in the Church, the complete triumph of the spirit of beneficence over avarice. Christians in greater numbers and more abundantly than at any former period, excepting the first, consecrate their wealth to carry benevolent plans into effect in the far distant isles, and in the uttermost ends of the earth; and we have specimens of munificence which would not have done dishonour to the apostolic age itself. The religious movements of the times, look manifestly to an indefinite enlargement of the church as their end; and as such enlargement is the high theme of prophecy, so, unless we

misjudge, is it the promise of the present course and aspect of Providence.

It is a privilege of the infant church which takes possession, for the first time, to-day, of the place in which its future worship is to be paid to the Most High, that it has had its birth, and it is to develope its powers, and to grow to maturity, and take shape and complexion, if it please, under the benign and ennobling influences of this most auspicious period. How great must become its usefulness and felicity, if it fall in with these influences, and avail itself fully of them, in seeking the appropriate end of its calling, and its existence as a church of Jesus Christ. How unhappy, on the other hand, should it contravene these influences, or fail to become an instrument of their just developement. It is under no necessity to do the one or

the other of these things; which of them it shall do, depends on its own choice; and its choice, in this instance, will probably decide its character and its destiny.

Thus persuaded, I have supposed that I could make no better use of the advantage which the present occasion gives me, than to employ it in inculcating some of the most important of those principles, by which, I think, Christians should be regulated in exerting their influence in behalf of their great cause; principles, which, if we faithfully observe them, will I doubt not, by the blessing of God, make this young church a praise and a rejoicing in the city and in the land.

I assume, that the principal design for which all Christians, whether as individuals or as associated in churches, should live, and move, and have their being in the

world, is not selfish but benevolent, not private but public, not the advancement of their own interest separately, but of the great interest of our Lord Jesus Christ; in a word, the spread and triumph of Christianity among mankind. I assume this, and I may safely assume it now, for it is fast becoming, as has already been remarked the general conviction of Christians. But were it not so, we ought still to maintain this position. There is nothing more unquestionable, nothing more manifestly true. It is true, and it is a truth which should be asserted and published, until the full power of it is felt throughout Christendom and the world. The supreme object for which every Christian on earth should live, is the discipling of the nations, the evangelizing of mankind. The religion of Christians was intended for universal propagation, and it is what all men

infinitely and alike need. Wherever this religion is not, there is the land of despair, the region of the shadow of death. And Christians are the selected instruments of its propagation, and have been charged by their Saviour himself, to undertake the work; and while he has plainly said that the work shall be done, he has said not less plainly, that it will not be done except by the personal sacrifices and labours of his followers. And besides all this, the very genius of Christianity, like the light of day, is boundlessly diffusive, and leads every mind whom it influences to seek its boundless spread. Nor is it possible for a man to do a thing more eminently Christian, or take any step better adapted to advance himself in the Christian life, than to give himself entirely to the work of making the world Christian. I will only add that all our obligations in this great concern, re-

ceive extraordinary enforcement from the spirit of the age, as briefly sketched at the outset; and that Christians and churches, who do not in these times make the christianizing of man, the chief end of their enterprize and zeal, should indulge small hope of success, unless they can prevail both against the inherent powers of their religion, and against as strong a current of providential influences as ever men, in the madness of their hearts, attempted to resist.

Taking then for granted that to evangelize the world is the great object of pursuit to all Christians, I advance and shall endeavour to maintain the following, as PRINCIPLES, by which their efforts in prosecuting this object should be regulated;—namely:

That they should seek to propagate

substantial Christianity, rather than any sectarian form of it;

That they should lay their plans of evangelism, so as to admit the coalition of all Christians;

That they should so conduct their proceedings as to evade as far as possible opposition from the world;

That nevertheless, the utmost zeal and resolution are indispensable to carrying the work forward; But, after all,

That they should depend for success, not on their own exertions, however unexceptionable, but on the co-operation of the divine Power.

I. My first remark is, that in our efforts to evangelize the world we should seek to propagate *substantial* Christianity rather than any *sectarian* form of it. Perhaps it is necessary that I should here explain myself.

Among the various sects of true* Christians, there are of course peculiarities which distinguish and unhappily divide them from one another; and there is also a *common faith*, which distinguishes them all from the world, but which indissolubly unites them to one another and to the great family of God in heaven and on earth. Their common faith is *substantial*, and their party peculiarities are *sectarian* Christianity. My position is, that in their efforts to spread the Gospel among mankind, Christians should seek to propagate, not the latter but the former, their common

* As all were not Israel who were of Israel, so all are not Christians who have assumed the Christian name. I speak not of nominal but real Christians. My object does not require me to specify the points in which the latter are always distinguished from the former. That there are such points is certain; and it is also certain, in my own belief, that these points, relate to doctrine, as well as spirit and conduct. I assume that these points are known, and that those only are admitted to be true Christians who are not radically delinquent in respect to them. I speak exclusively of those who are *admitted to be* the true followers and friends of Christ.

faith—not their sectarian peculiarities, what they agree, not what they differ in,—what unites, not what divides them. To be, if possible, yet more explicit, I mean to say, and shall attempt to prove, that their object should be to propagate not both what they agree and what they differ in; but what they agree in exclusively of what they differ in.* I am aware that there are those who may consider this a startling paradox, and I should not advance it but

*It were well, I think, if even ordinary discourses from the pulpit were restricted to these undisputed points. These points are sufficiently numerous and comprehensive to engross all the time and strength of preachers; and it is doubtful if there is a promiscuous congregation on earth that are not liable to be more injured than profitted by polemical sermons. To what does the most *laborious* indoctrination of the common people in polemical divinity generally amount? But have I not used an improper epithet? It is not controversial preaching that demands labour, but the practical enforcement of the great fundamentals of the gospel! Is not this among the reasons why controversy in the pulpit is so common? If a preacher wishes to make what most of his hearers will think an able discourse, at little expense of either time or thought, let him take as his theme, not some common-place topic of morals, or some article of the common faith, but a subject which will allow him to raise and resolve sectarian questions at pleasure.

from the most imperative sense both of its truth, and of the infinite importance of its being practically acknowledged as truth. The following are the grounds of this conviction.

1. Importance belongs to what Christians agree in, comparative nothingness to what divides them into sects. Of this, much as it is practically contradicted, perhaps no Christian would be thought seriously to entertain a doubt. What Christians agree in is what makes them Christians; what they differ in, is what has given rise to their other names—names which will not be known in heaven, and it were well if they should from this moment pass into perpetual oblivion. This thought I would fain indelibly impress on every mind, that it is the faith all Christians hold in common, in which salvation lies. It does not lie in points of sectarian contro-

versy, but in those great fundamentals which unite all Christians together, and make them one brotherhood, one indissoluble body, THE BODY OF CHRIST. Let me state this truth strongly, for so I think it should be stated. Presbyterians are not saved by their Presbyterian peculiarities, nor Episcopalians by theirs, nor Independents by theirs; but all are saved by what all hold in common, by what makes them Christians, not what makes them sectarians. A man may be a sincere and zealous sectarian and yet be at heart an enemy to Christianity, and be lost; lost he cannot be, and be a Christian. He may be a sectarian without being a Christian, and he may be a Christian without being a sectarian; and if he is but a Christian, he is a child of God, a member of Christ, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven, though every sect on earth should deny him its distinctive

name.* It is this unquestioned fact, that justifies the remark, that sectarian differences, compared to substantial Christianity are unimportant. The remark is true, unless it be not true that nothing temporal and momentary is worthy to be compared with the salvation of the immortal soul. Now as to the conclusiveness of this remark, as an argument for my position;—the propriety of insisting upon points, comparatively unimportant, depends always upon the nature of the business in hand. If the business be trivial,

* There are those who deem the divisions and disputes of the various churches, a sufficient apology for not connecting themselves with any particular church. But if these persons could justify themselves in their visible disunion from the church, the non-existence of the visible church itself were perhaps desirable, since that event would take place if their example should be universally followed. Deeply as the existence of sects is to be deplored, it is well on the whole that the visible church, divided as it is, remains; it is not wholly deserted by Heaven, and what God in his forbearance and grace accepts, man should not be so zealous for perfect purity and peace as to disown. The author speaks, in the text, not of those who will not belong to the visible church, because if they do so, they must connect themselves with a sect; but of those whom the sects will not, while admitting them to be Christians, receive into their associations.

and the consequences of no moment, whether it be done or not done, then little matters may have attention; but if the business be of the gravest sort, demanding the utmost application and despatch, it is most unmeet and unrighteous to give any place whatever to unimportant things. If for example, the nation was at war with a foreign power, and the crisis of the contest had come, and the leaders of the national forces should, the hour previous to entrance on the decisive battle, give themselves to disputes about matters of personal or private difference, instead of confining their attention to what was peremptorily demanded by the great exigency they were called to meet, with what indignation would their conduct fill the land? They would deserve the indignation and abhorrence of all men. Now the enterprise of propagating Christianity, if it be not perfectly

visionary and idle, is the gravest, the weightiest, the most pressing work in which men or angels ever were engaged: it is an enterprise contemplating the rescue of a world from eternal ruin. The case is this, unless our religion be a fable: Mankind are in perishing circumstances; an enemy is among them of such amazing malignity and power, that he accomplishes their everlasting destruction at the rate of twenty millions a year. Christianity is an influence which can overcome this enemy, and Christians undertake to apply this influence. I simply ask, are they serious in the undertaking. I make the appeal to you, whether if they are so, they can, with any propriety, or can at all, wish to engage the attention of mankind to their sectarian differences and disputes? The adversary can be defeated, men can be saved, without doing this; and till men are saved,

how can those who are seriously seeking their salvation, do any thing to occupy them, or wish to see them occupied about things which do not accompany salvation or tend to secure it? The perishing world are in no circumstances to enter into the doubtful disputations of the Christian sects; they are not likely to be benefitted, and may be fatally injured by giving thought to these matters; their tendency especially upon worldly minds, is to divert attention from the concerns of the soul; and to endeavour to persuade the world to embrace this or that side of these vexed questions, is more irrelevant and improper, than would be a debate about some matter of taste in literature or the arts, with persons whom we were endeavouring to rescue from the waves or the fire. This is my first argument for limiting the zeal of Christians in their efforts to evangelize

mankind to the propagation of *substantial Christianity*. It is, that there is comparatively no importance, in points of sectarian strife and division, no importance whatever relatively to the high end pursued, the recovery of immortal beings perishing in sin; and that seriousness in seeking this end, is incompatible with being occupied ourselves, or wishing to occupy others about matters, which instead of promoting may defeat it. I do not say that it is absolutely of no importance what side be right or what side wrong in sectarian controversies, but that the importance is small, comparatively; and that to seek to enlist the world, whether on this or that of these contending sides, is not the way to save them from the infinite ruin which is impending over them. If all men were already saved, I will not say what might be done, if charitably and peaceably done,

in respect to disputable points ; but if the world be as all Christians hold it to be, in sin and under wrath,—if graceless men pass into endless wo, as fast as they pass away from the earth, they should, unquestionably, have nothing to do, in their present circumstances, with points of doubtful disputation ; and Christians should not, while professedly aiming at their salvation, make these points any part of the subject-matter of their teaching and enforcements. This is the argument, and I think it must commend itself to the common-sense of my hearers, so long as it shall be admitted that the world is in a perishing state, and that the end of evangelizing is to convert and save it. Till then, whatever zeal may be shown in propagating sectarian peculiarities, will, I cannot but think, appear to all, who, in this matter, have their senses exercised to dis-

cover what is congruous and proper, as out of time, out of place, misdirected, misspent.

2. Another reason why we should not seek to propagate sectarianism among mankind is, that *there ought to be none among ourselves.* For if there ought to be none among Christians, there ought certainly to be none in the world, and if there ought to be none in the world, Christians should not endeavour to propagate it. The fact here asserted, however, will probably be assented to by some, who will yet think it, as an argument to my purpose, inconclusive; because, as they may allege, the same reason why there ought to be no sectarianism among Christians, demands that there be no differences, no sin among them; thus running up the argument, and so destroying it, into a perfectionism, which, it is supposed, is never to

have place on earth. But they mistake what is meant by the assertion: I mean that there ought to be no sectarianism among Christians, *notwithstanding* their differences. Let them, if need be, have their differences, but let not their differences develope themselves in sectarian divisions and parties. I fear this is an observation which some will be disposed to resolve into a visionary cast of mind, but I must beg them not to disparage their own claims to superior judgment, by discarding it, before they have dispassionately reflected upon it. My position is that there ought to be no sectarian divisions among Christians on account of differences among themselves. It matters not what the differences may be, they cannot justify their going off from one another, and forming distinct sects, and taking sectarian denominations on the principle of agreement

in differences, and thenceforth admitting none within their respective denominational pales, however Christian, who do not adopt their distinctive peculiarities; and thus keeping themselves apart from their brethren, and as things are in this world, making rivalry and contention among the members of the body of Christ, certain and unavoidable. There is, I aver before heaven and earth, no justification of things like these, and no one should on any ground attempt to justify them. No matter, I repeat, what the differences may be, the fact that they are differences among *Christians* is decisive, that they form no sufficient basis for sectarianism. They are differences among persons who agree in such and so many respects, that to divide on the ground of differences, is so unnecessary, so unnatural, that I can think of nothing which, in these respects,

can be compared to it. It is worse than if a man should part from a friend, dearer to him than life, simply because of some almost imperceptible dissonance in the tone of his voice. It is, according to an inspired illustration, as if the members of the body, the feet and hands, should fall into schismatical strife, because they hold not the same place in the system. There are those, I am aware, who would smile at these statements; but I must think they would be less disposed to do so, if their spiritual sympathies were purer, livelier, and more intelligent. If they had but a just sense of the magnitude and importance of those things in which all Christians agree with each other, and with Christ and his kingdom, they would exchange their pity at my earnestness against sectarian division, for wonder and grief that the thought of sectarianism was ever

indulged. I cannot now dwell upon these great points of union ; I have no time even to state them ; but if I had an angel's tongue I could not set them forth in their full greatness, beauty, and excellence. Let me only say that it is losing sight of these points, it is treating them as if they were nothing, to regard any points of difference as cause for sectarian separations.

It has been said, however, that unjustifiable as sectarianism may be, better have it, than that Christians should remain together, *feeling as they do, in respect to their differences.* Nay, it has even been urged that sectarianism is on the whole, gain to Christianity. But did Christ think so, when he made unity among his disciples the badge and evidence to the world, of their union to himself;* the means

* John xiii. 35.

by which the world is to be convinced that Christianity is true ;* the main subject—matter of the prayer † which he poured forth from his heart of love in behalf of all who should ever bear his name, just before his passion ? Did Paul think so when he likened division among Christians, to a war between the members of the same human frame ;‡ and demanded of the church of Corinth, if they were not carnal and did not walk as men, because there were divisions among them ; and said to the partizans in that church, is Christ divided ? and to the party that would be called by his own name, was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul ?‖ and besought the church of Rome§ to mark them who caused divisions and offences, and avoid them, as being persons

* John xvii. 21 † John xvii. ‡ Rom. xii. 25. ‖ 1 Cor. i. 13. § Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

who served not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly? Did another holy Apostle think so, when he spoke of those who separate themselves as sensual, not having the spirit?* Is it from the scriptures that the doctrine is derived, that sectarian divisions are *gainful* to Christianity? It is, my hearers, if sensuality, and the loss of the Holy Spirit's presence, and what the Apostles and Christ thought the supreme reproach of the Church, be gainful. Let the thing be mentioned, if it can be, from which scripture leads us to fear as great harm to Christianity. Can it be the sober judgment of any one that it is better to have sectarianism than not to have it? I cannot believe this. There is one thing worse than sectarianism. It is better to have sectarianism than no Christianity; but

* Jude 19.

not better than to have no sectarianism. It is not better in other words, to have Christianity with sects, than Christianity without them. It is not better, and no one I am persuaded can think it better. No, if such a state of things might be once again in the earth, as Christianity and no sectarian names and parties, there is no true Christian who would not long for the dawn of the happy day when it should be seen. While sectarianism remains, God, who has determined that the Gospel shall ultimately triumph, restrains its evil tendencies; but still it is an evil at whose abolishment heaven and earth would have occasion to keep jubilee a thousand years. Sectarianism ought, at this moment, to have no place: and the *Feeling* which gives rise to it, ought to have none. Christians ought not to *feel* as they do in view of their differences among themselves. I will not

name this feeling extravagant, it is in a just of view of things altogether groundless : nor could it have existence, but from a state of heart which makes great and little to change natures ; and which indulged, leads to absolute moral blindness. It is carnal, sensual, criminal feeling; it ought not to be indulged, but rebuked, repented of, and corrected ; or if it prove intractable, the evidence of its evil and pernicious nature ought to be proclaimed and dwelt upon ; and all who have not fallen under its infatuating power, ought to keep up constant lamentation and regrets. It ought no more to be indulged, than envy, or wrath, or malice, or lust, or covetousness, or any other bad feeling of the heart. There ought, I repeat, to be no such thing as sectarianism among Christians, and this sentiment should be henceforth, and in every appropriate way, incul-

cated in all the churches until it comes to be thought heresy and schism, not to believe and practically acknowledge it.

This is the second argument against the propagation of sectarian Christianity. It is an argument which none can misunderstand, and none, I presume, will attempt to resist it.

3. The third and last is, that *the world cannot be evangelized by the propagation of sectarianism.* It will ever be fatal to the success of the undertaking. This I think, every one must be convinced of, who will consider the matter either in the light of scripture, or his own common-sense. As to scripture-testimony, I will only observe that the zeal of our Lord and his Apostles against divisions, manifestly has this for its great argument, that the success of the Christian cause demands that as to divisions there be none. As to

the verdict of common-sense, let any one call to mind how things are in Christendom, and how they have been since it was split into contending divisions and parties; let him remember the bitter animosities, the reciprocal exclusions and anathemas, the altars against altars, the preaching against preaching, the systems against systems; let him remember how the labours of the different sects have always been crossing and checking, and neutralizing one another; and how, in consequence, Christendom itself has been an almost perpetual desolation, and is so at the present day; and how the world, instead of yielding to the power, or even confessing the truth of Christianity, have hardened themselves in a contemptuous and scornful infidelity, by observing how Christians deny their own principles in their dealings with Christians as well as with themselves; let any one,

I say, seriously consider these fruits of sectarianism in Christendom, and then believe if he can, that either Christendom or the heathen nations, will ever be truly evangelized by the propagation of sectarian Christianity. Will the tree which has been bringing forth these poisonous fruits in Christian lands, bring forth better ones by being transplanted into the wild soil of heathenism. No, it is a manifest certainty, and it ought to be held as an axiom by all Christians, that Christianity to be triumphant in this world, must go forth, not with her robes torn and defiled, her visage marred, her strength exhausted, by sectarian violence and abuse, but in her own native unity, simplicity, and beauty. Such is Christianity now, as held by all true Christians in common; the same simple, peaceful, consistent, dignified daughter of the skies, as at first;

such, then, by general consent, let her go forth, and let every one who bears her high name, lay aside, as far as may be needful, his other name, imposed by a sect, and join in the enterprise of giving her, in her pristine integrity and simplicity, the empire of the universe. Thus, most certainly, must she triumph, if she triumph at all.

II. So high and unassailable are the proofs of our first proposition; but not less so are those of the second. It is as evident that there should be no sectarianism *in our plans and measures* for propagating the gospel, as that there should be none in our aim and object. Our plans, it was said, should be such as to admit the coalition of all Christians, whatever may be their sectarian names and opinions.

This is a doctrine, I know, which since

the corruption and dismemberment of the Church, has found little favour, practically, in Christendom; but it is still most manifestly true and Christian doctrine, and was held and inculcated by the Apostles, and with the primitive church, in their triumphant efforts to spread the gospel, it had controlling influence; and objections to it do but show, how mighty is the spirit of sect to blind and infatuate the heart, and are objections, to a return to the spirit and practice of the primitive times—to obey the requisitions of scripture and of conscience. I feel myself compelled to insist on the adoption of this doctrine, as of vital importance. It must be adopted. The *necessity* of its adoption is as manifest as the absurdity of attempting to convert the world by propagating the bigotry, contradictions, and angry animosities of sectarianism. Without controversy, it must and will

be adopted, before the gospel achieves its destined victory over the world. That victory will be won by anti-sectarian Christianity, propagated by anti-sectarian measures of evangelism.

That the measures as well as the religion, must be anti-sectarian, is as obvious as that means used to accomplish a result should not in their own nature and tendency be adapted to defeat that result. Employing sectarian measures to promote an anti-sectarian object, is like raising the wind to still the waves, or pouring oil upon flames in order to quench them. It is cherishing sectarianism in one place, while professedly desiring and aiming to destroy it in another. It is filling the fountain in order to dry up the streams. It supposes that Satan is divided against himself; it is setting Satan to cast out Satan.

It is strange, passing strange, that our plans should be sectarian if our object be not so. With what show of consistency can we adopt such plans? Consistency is manifestly disowned by adopting them. I appeal to you, whether this be not the fact. Believing that importance belongs to what we hold in common with all Christians, and that there is, comparatively, no importance in what separates Christians from one another, and that the state of the world demands that we let unimportant matters alone in endeavouring to propagate our religion, and bestow our pains on the great things in which we are all united; thus believing, we professedly engage in the work of spreading the common salvation. We avow as our object the advancement of nothing peculiar to ourselves as sectarians, but of what no more concerns our own distinctive de-

nomination, than all of every name and sect who love the Lord Jesus Christ: and yet we adopt measures and plans of procedure in which none can join us without embracing our own denominational singularities. Is this to be consistent? We say to all Christians, we will not work with you, and you shall not work with us, unless you are baptized as we have been, and submit to our modes of discipline, and adopt our peculiar creed, and subject your charities and labours to our supervision and disposal; while our ostensible design is to advance, not our own cause by any means, but a cause in which every denomination's interest is as vital as ours—the Common Cause of all denominations, of all saints in heaven and earth, of Christ and his universal Church! Such is the glaring inconsistency of catholicism in object, and sectarianism in spirit and proceedings.

And what reason is there why we should repudiate consistency by retaining sectarianism in our measures? Do we not by so doing disparage all our pretensions to liberality? The sect which pursues such a course will never, can never be believed in its catholic professions: no, it will and ought to be distrusted: it will be regarded as after all having sectarian ends; and before God and man, it will display a sectarian banner, and to all intents and purposes, be most devotedly sectarian, both in plan and in object.

But if sectarianism in our plans were not incompatible with the absence of it from our object, still it should have no place in the former, provided it really have none in the latter. No, if it were possible by sectarian modes of action to favour the propagation anti-sectarian

Christianity, such modes should not be used. All sectarianism, as I have shewn, ought to be forthwith renounced, and to disappear out of the world. It is the great scandal of our religion, which all Christians should combine to abolish. But this is not done by those who put their modes and plans of effort under the exclusive control and dictation of the spirit of sect. If they oppose sectarianism in one way, they promote and build it up in another. In short, nothing can be plainer, than that the proof of our first proposition is virtually the proof also of that which is now before us. Admit that our object should be to propagate substantial Christianity, and it is at the same time admitted that we should have no sectarianism in our plans and measures of evangelization.

If it should be thought that our respective denominations have claims upon us,

which interfere with our uniting, in unsectarian plans and societies, with other Christians, I have only to request that this assumption may for one moment be looked at with a candid eye. It will not bear such an inspection. It will be found at once to be the very strong-hold of sectarianism. It is an error, a manifest and palpable error. As the Church of Christ now is upon the earth, no one can visibly join the Church, which it is certainly each person's duty to do, without associating himself with some one of the Christian sects; but when he joins a sect, he joins, and if his views be just, *intends* to join the great brotherhood of Christians, the divinely compacted, indissoluble body of Christ. From conviction, from education, from domestic relationship, from local convenience, or from undefinable feeling, he may be inclined to connect himself with one

denomination, rather than another; but what mainly leads him to seek admission into a particular church, is what constitutes him a Christian, the one spirit which pervades the whole family of God in heaven and earth; and the tie which binds him to his chosen sect, is as the spider's most attenuated thread, is less than nothing, compared to those everlasting bonds which make him and his Saviour, and all Christians, through time and eternity, one. It is to the cause of his Saviour that he consecrates himself, not to the cause of his sect. There is no covenant, no agreement, no understanding to the contrary of this. He binds himself indeed to seek the peace and edification of his brethren, and to be obedient, in the Lord, to their usages and requisitions; but he does not bind himself, in any respect, or instance, or manner whatsoever, to walk contrary

to the infinitely higher laws and demands of that great relation which he bears to the universal Church. The sect which he joins has itself no right to go contrary to, or disregard these demands; and can hardly do so without violating its title to the Christian name. If then a case should arise, in which the interests of the general cause of Christ, require an anti-sectarian movement, concurrence in such a movement is binding upon the sect and every individual belonging to it. But the interests of the Christian cause, demand, as we have seen, the very non-existence of sectarianism. The conclusion is, and—unless we are ready to confess ourselves so in love with the spirit of sect, as for the sake of it to fall out with reason—let us not resist this most logical conclusion, that every sect and every Christian on earth, is bound to concur in appropriate movements for

the abolition of sectarianism ; and it were well, it were cause for unspeakable joy, if every Christian should henceforth to the end of his days, give to such movements the complete devotion of his heart and strength. When a sect charges its members with unfaithfulness, because they are unsectarian in their associations and plans for spreading the gospel, it imputes to them as a fault, what it should praise as a rare excellence, and universally imitate.

There is, assuredly, no good, no sufficient reason for opposing anti-sectarian modes of effort. They are proper modes, and the only proper ones. Without a continued series of miracles, the end pursued is attainable by no other means. I pray that it may be inquired into and decided by all sects of Christians, whether I have not now uttered the truth. I ad-

dress myself to the common-sense of mankind, and ask before the face of the world, if it be not a manifest certainty, that there is no cause to hope for the general triumph of the gospel, from sectarian plans for its advancement. I make the same appeal to the scriptures. Their voice, in perfect consonance with that of our own common-sense, gives authoritatively and strongly, a negative answer: such an answer comes as in accents of thunder, from the recorded charges, remonstrances and prayers of Christ and his apostles against sectarian separations. With perfect confidence, I should anticipate the same answer from all the sects themselves, if they would give their deliberate decision on the point. It is then settled and agreed to, that measures pervaded and regulated by the spirit of sect,

are not appropriate and will not be successful.

Nevertheless, sectarian movements remain. They remain, and by some are most zealously contended for and promoted, as exclusively deserving of patronage. Will there ever be a limit to human inconsistency? And on what pretext think you, is this marvellous inconsistency maintained? On the no less marvellous pretext, that the time for ceasing from sectarianism has not arrived. Sectarianism, it is conceded, is wrong and undesirable, and must cease before the restraints which hinder the diffusion of the spirit of Christianity are removed, and will one day cease; but *the time is not yet come.* I wish it to be pondered, that this is the argument and the only argument for the continuance of the sectarian establishments and operations of these times. An

argument advanced, most surely, through inadvertence. As if a state of things which is certainly to come, and to come by the use of means suited to produce it, and for which the church and the whole creation are sighing and languishing, might all the while previously to its occurrence, be, of set plan and purpose, justifiably opposed and contended against! Let Christians generally fall in with the measures of sectarianism, and when think you will the time come for its abolition? Most certainly never, while they continue to do so.

Wherefore, I beseech you, as you desire to see the end of the Church's reproachful divisions and the bright day of her triumph, have nothing more to do with any sectarian plans for evangelizing men. I address this entreaty to you as individuals; my object is to pursuade you, one by one, each man for himself, to renounce perfect-

ly the spirit of sect in efforts and associations for the spread of Christianity. And I do this, from the full persuasion, that *the individual non-concurrence of Christians in sectarian measures*, is the way and the only way in which these measures and their object can be brought to an end. There is no hope that the sects as such, will formally resolve against sectarian action, or think the time come for ceasing from it, until it is actually ceased from by a decided and manifest majority of the individuals composing them. No; they will as long as possible, and by every means which the party feeling that pervades them can invent, perpetuate and defend such action. Nor is it by secessions, and new organizations on professed anti-sectarian principles, that the evil is to be destroyed. To withdraw from a sect, admitting it to be composed of Christians,

is essentially the same thing with sectarianism itself; it is, if I mistake not, the very sin of schism. There is however one way, and as far as I can see, but one, in which the great object of desire may be accomplished; that way has been mentioned; it is by each individual Christian's repenting apart of his past sectarianism and having no more to do with it, in any manner or instance whatever, the rest of his life. This is the way, and it is a sure and easy way to bring sectarianism to an end. In this way the abolition of the evil might be accomplished at once, and accomplished quietly and happily. In this way, it is most cheering to remark, its abolition is already in progress. That it is so, is the chief glory of the age. If I were asked to designate what I regard as the fairest of the signs of these times, I should mention this. Christians

of all sects, beginning to feel the power of those eternal bonds which bind them together and make them one in Christ, and the weakness of the causes, which have kept them apart, are associating in plans for evangelizing mankind, on the broad principles of their common faith; and God is manifestly with them in these holy associations; and every day, their numbers their resources and their successes are augmenting. And notwithstanding some recent indications that a spirit of opposition is rising up, I cannot think it possible effectually to resist the anti-sectarian impulse of these associations. No, the strength of God, I doubt not, is in it; the day of the latter glory of the gospel is dawning: the time of the abolition of sects and sectarianism, if not come, is nigh at hand: happy is every one who, by appro-

priate prayer and effort, aims to accelerate its progress.

III. I proceed to the consideration of the third principle by which the conduct of the enterprise should be governed: It is, to evade as far as possible, that is, as far as may be done consistently with faithfulness in pursuing the great object, all opposition from the world.

This principle, thus explained, will not, I presume, be controverted; since the question, how far faithfulness in carrying on the work may consist with efforts to evade adverse consequences, is left undecided. Some indeed seem to hold that faithfulness is incompatible with all respect to such consequences, and will not even admit a question on this point; but I cannot help thinking that even these persons, clearly and seriously apprehending

the real matter, would probably decline gainsaying it. Much of the discourse which has of late been held in the press and in the pulpit, against *expediency*, misnames, as it seems to me, the object of its denunciation. That object, is in fact, carnal policy, a selfish time-serving management, a most unchristian and unprincipled thing truly, which deserves to be universally denounced; but why should it be identified with expediency? Expediency, in the just sense of the word, is a very different, and, common as it has become to speak against it, I must say, a very good thing. Nay, what is expedient, is what on the whole is for the best; and, what is *for* the best, *is* best; and virtue and the law of God, of course, demand that it be pursued. It can be consistently denounced or stigmatized, surely, by none but malevolent persons. Will it be said

that what is for the best in the present case, is already ascertained to be, to pay no regard to consequences; so that we have nothing to do with the question of expediency; and that to consult expediency, now that what is for the best is known, is indeed one with consulting with flesh and blood? This, I answer, rests upon an assumption, which manifestly leads to all the extravagancies and mischiefs of fanaticism. The assumption is that *we already know* that what is for the best in efforts to evangelize mankind, is to pay no regard to the consequences of our measures; not even to ask the question, whether they will be likely to excite opposition or not. But is this the fact? Let the proof of it be shewn. There is no explicit assertion of it in scripture; nay, both the examples and precepts of Christ and the apostles, are directly

against it. The first propagators of the gospel exercised the most consummate discretion in their use of measures; and they required their successors to walk in their footsteps. It is not sufficient, according to their teaching, that we aim at the accomplishment of a good end, and that we pursue that end with self-renouncing zeal, and prepare ourselves to die, in carrying the design forward; but we must take heed to ourselves, in every step and turn of our proceedings, lest we do, say, feel, or conceive somewhat, which may not be *wise*, or in itself adapted to effect our purpose. I need not recite the places which make this extreme care imperative upon us.*

Is it objected that our Saviour taught his disciples that prudent as they might

* See Matt. x. 16. xvii. 27. Rom. xiv. 13. 1 Cor. viii. 9—13, ix. 12, 19-23, x. 23, 24, 32 33. 2 Cor. vi. 3. 1 Tim iv. 16. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

be, the world would oppose them, nay that they were to embark in the work with the assured expectation of encountering the world's opposition in the most formidable shapes? I grant that he did so: But does this imply that we should not as far as in us lies, endeavour to evade that opposition? If it must come, may it not, on many accounts, be important, that it come not by any imprudence or impropriety on our part? If we must be opposed, will it not be an advantage to us, to be opposed on account of wisdom rather than folly; of discretion rather than rashness in our measures? Our Saviour did assure his disciples, that the world would reproach and persecute them, but he gave them that assurance, it deserves to be considered particularly I think in these times, as a reason not for recklessness, but for the greatest possible prudence of

procedure. "Behold," he said, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves!" What hope, even of escaping with life, in such circumstances? But should we therefore dismiss all care about our ways and movements? The very reverse: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." There are, it has been remarked,* neither teeth, nor stings, nor venom, nor wreaths and folds of serpents which ought not to be known; and our knowledge of these should not be more perfect than our measures in respect to them, should be wise and judicious. In no way whatever,—neither in deed nor word nor look nor thought, should we give just occasion of offence: Nothing needlessly severe, nothing rude, nothing ill-timed, nothing in

* By Lord Bacon, as the reader would probably have inferred from the manner of the expression.

any respect injurious, or wrong, or unlovely, or on any ground exceptionable, will find the least countenance, either from our Saviour's precept or practice.* If we must become a prey to the world's teeth, let it be because of our innocence and faithfulness not because of our passion and imprudence.

Let me now mention a manifest mistake, which, as I apprehend, lies at the basis of most of the unwise movements of religious benevolence. It is the enforcement of what is called abstract truth or right, without due consideration of the end pursued. A prudential regard to the end is not allowed to shape and regulate the *manner* of the enforcement; but it is enough that what is enforced, be what, in abstract

* To allege in disproof of this remark, the sternly reprehensive strain of our Lord in Matt. xxiii. is to lose sight of the peculiar character both of the speaker and the persons addressed. Boldness may be wisdom.

justice and truth, cannot be found fault with, and ought to obtain; a principle of proceeding which, human nature and human society being what they are, rests the hope of success, on miracle or accident, or on means which do not concur with but tend to countervail, the immutable laws of the moral world. It ought not to be overlooked, that this mistake, palpable as it is, is one to which we are specially liable, through the vehemence of our passions, in carrying forward our enterprises of religious zeal. Sacred story tells us that two of the apostles fell into this plain mistake. "Lord wilt thou," said the ardent sons of Zebedee, "that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them,* as Elias did?" These disciples, in their indignation at the

* The inhospitable Samaritans.

incivility of the Samaritans, thought of nothing but an instant execution of what was abstractly just, upon these guilty persons. Their Lord corrected them by putting them in mind of what they had for the moment forgotten, the very object of his appearance in the world: "The son of man is come, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." The consideration of the end in this case was the lodestar to what was judicious, and christian, and in every sense *right*, as to measures. It brought the minds of the disciples to a balance, and showed them the difference between madness and wisdom in dealing with men in order to win and convert them.

Let us not be above learning wisdom in the same way. The object of all christian zeal, let us never forget, is not that men be treated according to their de-

sert ; or be convicted of guilt, or exposed to reproach, or tormented before the time, or tormented at all, but that they be recovered to the paths of holiness and eternal life. This is the end, and all our measures of reform and of religious benevolence, should have constant respect to it, and be adapted in their own nature and tendency to produce it. As servants of Christ seeking the object which he sought and requires us to seek, we have no right to use measures, however warranted by simple justice, or by what men deserve, of a contrary tendency. Our measures should be those which wisdom in subservience to benevolence and mercy, not which naked distributive justice demands. It is not what men deserve, or what they have done, or are doing, that should be mainly considered, but what is suited to reclaim and save them. Their guilt

unquestionably should not be disregarded, but as our object is not to expose and punish their guilt, but to bless and save them, our measures should have to do with their guilt, only in so far and in such manner as may comport with the earnest and wise pursuit of that object. It may be necessary, indeed, in order to save some men, to pursue measures in respect to others, impossible, as the case is, to be pursued, without exasperating and hardening them; but this necessity is of rare occurrence, and never should we move in such extraordinary cases but with the meekness of wisdom in an extraordinary degree. Our great business, we should ever remember with humble and adoring gratitude, is the business of reclaiming and saving men, not the awful work of judgment and condemnation.

I regard this principle, the due conside-

ration and observance of the end, as the summary of truth and wisdom in respect to methods of procedure in carrying on our great work. Steadfastly followed it would have prevented mistakes, and a recurrence to it will cure them. Let us but first discipline our minds to candour and docility, and well consider what is to be done, and the ways and means of doing it will naturally suggest themselves. We shall almost intuitively see, both the measures proper to be used and the proper manner of using them. We shall need no other directory. Better, as a guide in the way of practical wisdom, is this law of consideration, than were a book of minute instructions respecting measures in every instance in which we shall ever be required to act. Such a book would be rendered useless by its bulk and worse than useless by superseding the exercise of discretion and prayer, and by

the consumption of time in consulting it. Let it not be thought that we may thus be led to the adoption of measures, in themselves unlawful; unlawful measures are not and can not be *adapted to accomplish* a good end. A good end and one proper to be pursued, implies the lawfulness of whatever means are suited in their own nature and tendency to effect it. The requisite means cannot be in themselves unlawful, just because the end is a lawful one: otherwise it may be right to do a thing and yet wrong to use the means of doing it! It is a lawful and an excellent work to seek the salvation of the world; the death of Christ, the divine command, and the glorious results involved in this work, make it so; and this demonstrates the lawfulness of whatever measures are demanded in order to its accomplishment. Let the end be holy and the means which it calls for are of course

holy also.* And further, no other means are holy or legitimate, besides those for which the end does call. If we are using means not in themselves adapted to effect the specific object of christian enterprise, means not suited by their own direct tendency to convert and save men, we are, in this violation of the dictates of common prudence and discretion, violating holiness, discarding the wisdom which cometh down from above. If the scope and tendency of our proceedings be, simply to inflame the enmity of mankind, or to convict them of guilt or to involve them in merited reproach, or aught else than their recovery

* The principle condemned by the apostle, (Rom. iii. 8,) "let us do evil that good may come," respects the production of good out of evil not *as a means*, in the proper sense of the word, but as giving *occasion* to Divine Providence to display its counter-working wisdom and goodness in making that result in good which in itself tends only to evil. Strictly speaking when the end is good, the means, that is, an instrumentality suited in itself to effect the end, cannot be evil.—Evil-doing tends not to good but universally to evil. "He that committeth sin is of the devil.'

to holiness and God, then are our proceedings however evincive of self-denial and zeal, evincive also of self-delusion or malign passion; and well might we be addressed with the reprehensive question of the prophet, "who hath required this at your hands?"

I would therefore propound and enforce this simple principle, with all possible earnestness, *Let the end* be considered to learn the means.* It is a sure and a sufficient guide; and we have no other. I repeat it, *we have no other.* There is no other preservative from the excesses and irregularities of fanaticism, no other path of wisdom, no other trustworthy guide. If we consult the scriptures, they give us no other; if we ask directly of God, he en-

* It may be thought that *circumstances* should have been added; but it is the consideration of *the main thing to be done* that will show us how to proceed in respect to circumstances. Whether we are wise or unwise in our treatment of a *prejudice*, for instance, depends on what we wish to accomplish.

lightens us by his Spirit in no other way than by leading us to meek and patient reflection on the appropriate end of our undertaking: *The Son of man is come not to destroy but to save.* If dispassionate and devout and just consideration of what is to be done, does not show us what measures to employ, we are left without any sure direction as to particular measures, human or divine. Neither by his word, nor in answer to prayer, does God *directly* instruct us, as to the specific measures proper to be used in particular cases. His instructions are general, not particular: as to myriads of minutiæ, we must proceed in the light of our own discretion, after imbuing our hearts by prayer and meditation with the meekness of heavenly wisdom, or walk in the darkness of our own self-will and pride.

Guided by the principle of common

sense now brought into notice, we come at once to the following results, which, as maxims of conduct in this great work, I might profitably occupy hours in illustrating, but which I have time barely to mention. They are announced not as new discoveries, but as old and familiar precepts, which amidst the excitements and stirs of the times, ought not to lose their place in our remembrance.

1. To have respect in our proceedings to general and future consequences, and not to immediate and particular ones only. Our work is complicate and progressive; what we do at one time and place, may have influence on what we may, hereafter have to do ; and if ill done, may hinder us; and however gainful at the moment, may be a loss on the whole.

2. To work, not as if we were isolated agents, exerting each one his own strength

apart from all others, but as those should do, who are workers together with others, whose movements they should seek not to interfere with, but to second and promote. The end we are seeking is one which others are seeking along with us, and measures adapted to thwart their measures, or evincive of contempt or disregard of them, may be such as a just consideration of the end would lead us to forego.

3. To vary our measures so as to have them always as perfectly adapted as possible to the varieties of character and circumstances in those on whom they are to be tried: not to deal with common men, as if they were pharisees who had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost; nor with intelligent and educated men, as if they knew nothing; nor with men of taste and manners, as if they were barbarians; nor with rude and ignorant persons as if

they were philosophers. Consideration of the end in specific cases will at once dictate to us, as it did to the great apostle, the *expediency* of following this rule.

4. Not to think, that, as a matter of course, we are unfaithful or time-serving, if we do not assail directly and with intense censures, whatever we find wrong whether in Church or State, communities or individuals. Things may be wrong and it may be our duty to aim at reforming them; but instead of an instant assault, the true mode of correction may be not the direct but an unobtrusive and indirect one. Peculiar wisdom is necessary to regulate us in regard to the different modes of proceeding proper in respect to different sorts of evils; but considering the end with meekness of heart, and reliance on the Holy Spirit, and a readiness to walk in the footsteps of

Christ and the apostles, will supply that wisdom.

5. Not always to aim at doing what is abstractly or absolutely best, but to content ourselves with doing the best which can be done, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves placed. It may be, that far less energetic measures than those we could wish to use, are the only ones the case admits of; and thus our benevolence may be restrained by circumstances which cannot be altered. We cannot relinquish our purpose; we cannot do all we could wish to do, in order to accomplish it; let us then do the best we can, in the circumstances in which we are required to act.

6. Not to judge ourselves unfaithful if we do not on all occasions tell the whole truth, and tell it as strongly as possible, and tell it at once; but to use discretion in bringing forth the truth, and bring it forth,

if need be, very gradually and by instalments; letting the rays of knowledge gently in at first, and proportioning their increase, to the increase of men's ability to bear them. It is often perfectly manifest, that the end, without a miracle is attainable in no other way.

7. To address ourselves assiduously and skilfully to every thing in man which may be made to contribute to the attainment of our purpose; not to conscience only, or a sense of guilt only, or fear only; but to the social principle, to self-respect, to the love of excellence, to the desire of happiness and every other natural power and susceptibility. This course is right, nay, is obligatory and necessary, in justly and wisely pursuing such an end as that in question, reclaiming men to holiness and heaven.

These then I propound as maxims of

evangelism: They are manifestly founded in fitness and propriety, and it might be shown, if time were not wanting, that they have the sanction of our Saviour's and the apostles' practice, and further that they have been strictly conformed to, by the Supreme Disposer and Ruler himself, in the general course of the divine dispensations toward man from the beginning of the world.

IV. I am aware that the period ordinarily given to the exercises of public worship is already past, and yet I must not leave the remaining parts of the subject wholly uninconsidered. A word or two at least on each of these must be spoken.

If any one should suppose from what has been said under the former division, that ZEAL is not demanded in spreading the gospel, I must protest against the infer-

ence not only as the exact reverse of my belief, but as by no means contained in the premises. Are zeal and discretion antagonist qualities? or must we be counted the enemies of zeal because we prefer a different kind of zeal from that driving sort so stigmatized in scripture? May not zeal work by discretion, and have its sphere and its operations thus enlarged? Assuredly, there is quite as much occasion for zeal, according to the view which has been given of the plan of proceeding in the foregoing remarks, as according to the opposite or any other view. Why may we not be as zealous in pursuing the path of wisdom as the path of indiscretion? The power of motive is not diminished but increased. The magnitude of the end is better appreciated, and the consciousness of pursuing it wisely, gives the strongest assurance of success, and thus induce-

ment to effort, is every way, augmented. Let no one then mistake the drift of my former remarks. I have not meant to encourage lukewarmness in the work of God. I have not meant to intimate that the Church generally, or any single individual in the Church, is too zealously engaged in this work. I have not said this, and I do not believe it. Far otherwise is my conviction. Active as the age is, it must doubtless be incomparably more active in the department of religious benevolence, before the world is evangelized. There is not excitement enough, not intensity enough in our general tone of feeling, to convince mankind that we are in earnest in seeking their salvation. They do not believe, and while we proceed as we now do, they will not believe, that we are sincere; and hence their deep infatuation in respect to their eternal relations and interests. The facts

of our religion, demand that we give ourselves up to the work of saving our fellow-men as the one all-absorbing concern of life; and we must meet this demand, or notwithstanding all our professions and reasonings, instead of making mankind Christians we shall confirm them in their infidelity and delusion. Much as we should lament the extravagances of a few in the Church, the apathy of the many is a thousand-fold more to be deplored. Yes, here after all is the cause for sadness and sorrow. The whole world are asleep in sin, and Christians themselves are not sufficiently awake to sound an effectual alarm in their ears. This, this is the matter for grief and wonder. The work of death and destruction is always advancing with terrible rapidity, and almost nothing is done to resist it. Who is there that thinks there is or can be too much zeal in

saving men, on the part of Christians? There was not too much in the apostolic age, and it is quite as imperatively called for, quite as necessary now, as it was then. When our ministers preach and pray and labour as much as did the apostles, and when the private members of our churches are as self-denying and devoted to Christ as were the primitive Christians, then and not till then, let us think that our times are characterized by an exemplary zeal in spreading the gospel. Let all the Church assuredly know that this work demands *the entire strength of every living Christian, nor should any one engage in it without intending and pledging himself by the grace of God fully to meet the demand.*

And if thus it were prosecuted, times of trial would speedily return; and zeal would call for RESOLUTION; and the work would be at a stand, if devotion to it were

not stronger than the love of life, and if Christians would not again be sooner counted as sheep for the slaughter than be be moved from their purpose of evangelizing men. Be it known then that what was said before in favour of expediency, was not spoken out of regard to the personal comfort or safety of Christians: No, the principle and drift of those remarks were as much higher, as the glory of God and the salvation of a world, are more important than any individual interest. Not that I suppose that life is to be needlessly exposed, or that a Christian may any more die than live to himself; but that the risks and labours of all Christians should be kept under the control of perfect wisdom, so that the cause of Christ may suffer no damage by improvidence. I have not supposed, my brethren, that we should, *for our own sakes*, count our lives dear to us; or

that we might, by adopting the doctrine of expediency, be spared from the necessity of surrendering our lives. This is not my belief. On the contrary I think that if we add zeal to wisdom in equal measure, we shall be strangely inconsiderate if we do not from the first, lay our lives with our substance and our all upon the altar, as a whole burnt-offering to Jesus Christ. The work we undertake cost our blessed Lord life, and he forwarned his first servants that it would cost them life likewise, and it did so: And if wisdom could not save them, neither, if our zeal be equal to theirs, will wisdom save us? It may rather expose us to greater peril. The more perfect our wisdom, if zeal keeps equal pace, the more shall we sect in exercise that invisible sagacity, which is the remote spring of all opposition to the gospel; and thus be more annoyed by well-contrived schemes of re-

sistance. It is not rashness but wisdom in measures, that our great adversary fears; the former he promotes, the latter excites his apprehensions and his deep-plotting wrath. Nor is there any thing in the state of the world, whether in Christendom or in heathen nations, to interfere with his renewing the scenes of ancient persecution, if he should think these to be again necessary.

V. My last remark relates to the ground of all just expectation of success; but here I regret that I must not dwell, though the topic deserves the deepest consideration. Let me only remark that it it a fact, as explicitly asserted in Scripture as any other, that the power by which Christian enterprise, however wisely and energetically conducted, prevails, is not the inherent power of the enterprise, but

the supernatural and unsearchable influence of the Spirit of God: And that as this is the sole ground of hope, it should, for many obvious reasons, be distinctly, constantly, and in every proper way, acknowledged. Here is the light and the life of enterprise, the spring of incitement to holy daring and a martyr life, the strength which earth and hell cannot resist, the exhaustless treasury of resources, the basis of assured faith, the earnest and pledge of triumph, the immoveable rock of hope and trust: and never, never should this be forgotten. No, it should infuse itself into all our prayers, all our plans, all our thoughts, and be ever working within us like the working of our heart. Read the history of the first doings of Christian self-denial, and mark how all was incited, strengthened, superintended, succeeded, by the al-

mighty agency of the Holy Spirit. Read the epistles of the leading actors in those scenes of glorious wonder, and mark how they ascribe to that agency, whatever was accomplished through their instrumentality; and, as far they were right or favourable to the cause, even the secret exercises and feelings of their minds. The dispensation we live under, is the dispensation of the Spirit; and therefore is it the dispensation for evangelizing the world. O let us not for a moment forget this, while prosecuting our measures for spreading the everlasting gospel. Let us go forward with our measures, looking for success not from our measures, which even angelic power could not make efficient, but from the invisible and omnipresent energy of the Holy Spirit of God: strengthened, by that Spirit, with all might in the inner man: Filled with all the fulness of God.

Such, as it seems to me, are the great principles, by which the present effort of the Church to give the gospel triumph in the world, should be conducted. I am very sensible that I have done them no justice in this short discussion. I have not however supposed that much enlargement, except for the purpose of awakening attention and feeling, can in regard to either of them be necessary. They carry their evidence with themselves, and need only to be looked at in order to be believed in and embraced by every candid mind. Nor have I thought to accomplish any thing more by my plain remarks than to give some impression to known and undoubted truths, to quicken reflection in some degree, on what I am sure all must admit to be entitled, in the highest degree, both to their meditative and practical regard. And why is it, let me ask in conclusion, that

these principles have not been respected and acted upon, from the commencement of the recent movements for the salvation of the world? Is it not because of this that the business of spreading the gospel has advanced so slowly in our hands? If when modern Christians undertook the work which prospered so remarkably in the primitive age, they had returned to primitive principles and ways of procedure, is it to be doubted that they would have had somewhat of primitive encouragement and success? I cannot pursue this hint, but leave it for reflection. Of this however there is no room for doubt, that whatever may be urged as to the difficulty of returning to the principles of the first times, they are the true principles of the word of God, the settled and unchangeable rule of the divine administration in

respect to this great matter. They never will be altered, they must be returned to; and will as certainly be returned to, as that Christianity will again triumph. This is my conviction, and hence I have ventured to advance them on this occasion, and with some earnestness to propose them to this newly-formed Church, as the guide and rule of all their labours in the cause of their Lord and Saviour. I know of nothing so likely to be said against them with effect, as that they are incongenial with the present state of things in the Church on earth: I admit that they are, and if this state of things were the best, or were never to be changed, this admission would be inconsistent with my zeal in insisting upon them. But what is the present state of things in the Church? Alas! is it not a state which every Christian must lament, and long to have changed

without more delay? And is it not with full certainty to be changed? And further, is not the time of the change drawing nigh? But can it ever be changed for the better by being encouraged and promoted, or by pursuing plans and principles which suit it entirely, and fall in with its spirit and tendencies? Where, my brethren, is the consistency or the benefit, of sighing and praying for achange, and at the same time doing nothing to bring it about, nay exerting ourselves to prevent it? The sentiments and strain of this discourse I am deeply conscious, do not, for the most part, harmonize with the existing condition of things in the Church; but my apology is that they do harmonize with the spirit of the gospel and with what the Church should be; and that repentance should take place where there is wrong, not where every thing is right and perfect. Let the Church reform: so

demands the great Head of the Church; so the salvation of the world requires; so I have intended to insist in these free remarks. Let the Church reform: Would that God would raise up another prophet, like him of old,* full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin, until principles admitted to be divine and unchangeable, and more important than the tongue of man or angel can express, are no longer practically treated by the Church as if they were false and pernicious and a terror.

Shall I conceal it, that it is my heart's desire and prayer to God for this Church, that it may be a Church in which the spirit of the gospel may predominate over the spirit of sect, and bring forth fruits after its

* Micah iii. 8.

own heavenly and anti-sectarian kind: that it may live too much in the temper of the Church above, too nigh to the throne and mercy seat of God, and too much in communion with its blessed Head and Lord, and have too much love for souls, and too much zeal for the general cause of Christ, to be inclined to take part in those strifes of words and doubtful disputations, and party movements and contrivances, by which the face of the times, especially in this country is beginning to be overcast. Ought I to refrain from expressing this as the most fervent of my wishes in behalf of this Church? And if not should I have suppressed, or should I now take back, any thing which I have this day uttered in enforcement of the principles of life and conduct which must followed, or all hope be abandoned that my desire will be fulfilled? No; these

principles deserve, and I trust they will soon receive, open adoption in all the churches. The voice of Providence calls aloud, and will call I doubt not yet louder and louder, for their universal acknowledgment in practice. But if others will not hear the call shall it not be heard by you, my brethren, who have as a Church just commenced life? You have nothing to interfere with your acknowledging them: no usages, no associations, no rooted prejudices. You can acknowledge them, without detriment or difficulty of any sort whatever. Not so, however in respect to your not acknowledging them. You cannot take that course without great hazard: There is a spirit in the times in which we live, which if I understand it aright demands that you take not that course, and to resist that demand may be fatal to your usefulness and your prosperity.

It is well known how much success in worldly matters, whether of individuals or associations, depends on their coincidence of purpose and effort with favourable tendencies in times and occasions: not less important may be such coincidence in order to spiritual success on the part of Christians and churches. When Moses, seeing one of his brethern suffer wrong, avenged him that was oppressed and smote the Egyptian, he supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would have delivered them, but they understood not; and the penalty of their inadvertence was a forty years' protraction of their bondage. Is it not but too probable that there are now both individuals and churches, that instead of advancing in spiritual strength, are pining away and ready to die, amidst the best advantages ever granted to man-

kind, simply because, from their blindness, or wilfulness, or both, they do not concur with, but resist and thwart that mighty momentum in the moral world, which has manifestly set in, of late years, in favour of a second and more perfect victory of the gospel. Beware, said Paul in his exhortation to the Jews, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold ye despisers and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days; a work which ye shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you. Let us take heed, that this ancient warning be not fulfilled in us. God is performing a work in our days, and the evidences of the fact are before our eyes. Let us see to it that we duly acknowledge those evidences by becoming workers together with God; aiming at the same end, and pursuing that end, according to the measure of

our ability, with the same spirit the same singleness of heart and the same zeal. Eye hath not seen ear hath not heard nor hath entered the heart of man, the good which this Church may on the one hand accomplish, or on the other hand hinder and destroy, according as it concurs or declines concurring with divine demands and intimations, in this very peculiar and interesting age.

THE END.

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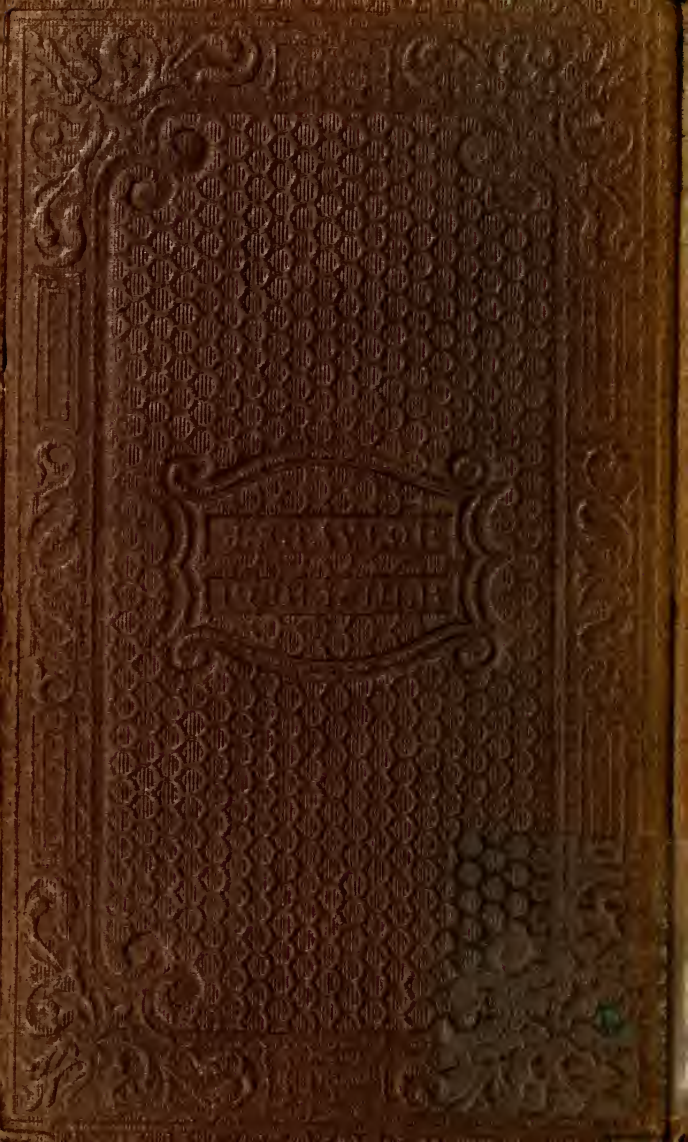
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